

Peninsula Times Tribune

Sunday, March 25, 1984



Francesco Guardi's "Rialto Bridge, Venice" is part of the Mildred Anna Williams Collection of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. Eighteenth century Venice is the subject of an April 6-8 weekend program in Berkeley.

18th century Venice program topic.

The glories of 18th century Venice, the ultimate traveler's destination, will be appraised and appreciated in a lush weekend program, "Venice in Glorious Decline," April 6-8 in Berkeley.

This immersion weekend is the first presentation of Humanities West, an independent, nonprofit organization formed to explore history, arts and ideas through a series of interdisciplinary weekends.

"Rembrandt's Amsterdam" has been scheduled for the fall, and "Los Angeles in the 1940s," for next spring.

The weekend on Venice will combine baroque music, arts and

history of this 18th century resort city.

Venice in decline was legendary, dazzling. Royalty and wealthy tourists would gather during carnival season. Opera was the lavish centerpiece. On stage, bands of hunters might stalk real deer, camels and elephants. At one performance of a serenata, the sets consisted entirely of hand-blown glass.

The weekend will open with a Friday lecture by Albert Fuller, professor at Juilliard School of Music, and a reception.

The Saturday program includes presentations on the social world of Venice, journalism, art work as souvenirs, preservation of the Vene-

tian treasures, and a chamber music concert.

The final day centers on music, with lectures on musical life in Vivaldi's Venice punctuated by Tommaso Albinoni's comic intermezzo in three parts, "Pimpinone," in its first live performance in modern times. Alessandro Vattani, consul general of Italy, will give the concluding remarks.

The events are scheduled at University Christian Church and Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley. Tickets may be purchased for the entire weekend or for single days and some events. Information: Humanities West, Box 10052, Berkeley 94709, or dial (415) 232-8850.

Stars Hold Forth In Venetian Music

BY HEUWELL TIRCUIT

This weekend's conference on Baroque music of Venice, first of a series from Humanities West, hit something of a peak Saturday evening in Berkeley's University Christian Church. A chamber concert, expertly chosen and expertly played, was the kind of event we normally expect only from major European summer festivals.

Sopranos Judith Nelson and Susan Rode Morris were featured in duo madrigals and cantatas of Barbara Strozzi and Benedetto Marcello, in addition to a fun set of six authentic Gondola Songs. Nelson added Marcello's pastoral cantata, "Libero fin," and Morris a dramatic aria from Vivaldi's lost opera, "Saziero col morir mio." (Only two fragments, this being one of them, survive.)

These works were accompanied by authentic period instruments (cello and harpsichord, for the most part), but purely instrumental pieces also were played, spliced in between the vocal items.

Jaap Schroeder, the distinguished scholar-violinist, played sonatas of Vivaldi and Alessandro Marcello (Benedetto's brother), as well as a curious four-movement "Invention" from Bonporti's Op. 10. Anchor for the entire evening was harpsichordist Elaine Thornburgh.

The stars shone the brightest, with Nelson and Schroeder offering the program's outstanding sections. All the players were able and highly stylish, but these two artists brought a special factor to their work: sonic finesse.

As to the music, the outstanding discoveries came from the Marcello brothers. Here was elegance and proportion mixed with delightful inventive touches. Vivaldi, by contrast, sounded like just more Vivaldi. They were "nice" — but not more.

Benedetto's setting of Psalm 94, for instance, is a stunning piece of work. It has charm, drama, harmonic bravura and beautiful settings of the text. But especially noteworthy were the psychological awareness of his audience as viewed from musical architecture.

The text is long, in 16 stanzas — two pages' worth —

TODAY

THEATER

American Conservatory Theater: Terence Rattigan's "The Sleeping Prince." 8 p.m. Geary Theater.

CLUBS

Gun Club, Yo. 9 p.m. I-Beam, 1748 Haight Street.

Maryanne Price and Millionaires, 6 p.m.; Girl Can't Help It and Exposure, 9 p.m. Baybrick, 1190 Folsom Street.

United Front. 9 p.m. Bajone's, 1062 Valencia.

Marcia Ball. 9 p.m. Larry Blake's, Berkeley.

GALLERIES

Carolyn Harter Gareis: works on paper. Perception Gallery, Fort Mason Center, Building C.

and relatively grim in tone. ("While my bones are broken, my enemies who trouble me have reproached me," and such.) Looking over the poem, one might expect it to be a tedious bore.

In the hands of many a composer, it surely would have been, but not a Marcello. (Venetians don't do that! In my experience, the citizenry of Venice is sometimes a bit giddy — but never boring.)

Marcello zipped through the text in gig time, about 15 minutes. His solutions to the problems are marvelous: eating up gobs of the text with intense recitatives. Here lies his dramatic-power element.

But the three duo-arias are all quickly dispatched, all in major keys but contrasting tempos. Little wonder this work became what amounts to a "Top 40s" of the 18th century — even in colonial America. Wonderful!

A Look at When Venice Got It All Together

MUSIC

ROBERT COMMANDAY

Venice, *la Serenissima*, sustains a world-wide fascination three centuries past its peak moment in history. It is the result of the city's tradition of all its arts together. No specialized look at one facet of that cultural diamond, whether its art, music, theater, letters or its brilliant social activity could do that single aspect justice. They were integral parts of one culture.

For that reason, the seminar this weekend in Berkeley, "Venice in Glorious Decline," is promising. Musicians will join with scholars in the arts and humanities to create a composite portrait of 18th-century Venice.

Humanities West, an independent, non-profit organization, is presenting the three-day seminar at the Pacific School of Religion (PSR) and University Christian Church, near the intersection of Leconte and Scenic Avenues, just north of the UC-Berkeley campus.

In old Venice, comic intermezzi were played as relief between the acts of long and serious operas. Sunday in Berkeley, one of those will

provide the musical diversions separating the day's three lectures and a panel discussion at PSR's D'Autremont Hall, 1789 Scenic Avenue. It will be the first production in modern times of "Pimpinone" (in translation) by Tommaso Albinoni.

It's a basic intermezzo "sit-com" about the rich old bachelor Pimpinone (Paul Tavernier, baritone) and his designing maid-servant Vespetta (Dorothy Barnhouse, mezzo soprano).

Stage director Nicholas McGegan, of Washington University, will be on the post-"Pimpinone" panel discussing baroque opera staging with the seminar's other musical participants. Eleanor Selfridge-Field, who discusses Vivaldi in Sunday morning's opening lecture, and Robert Holmes of the UC-Irvine music faculty, an afternoon lecturer on Venetian opera, together with Pocket Opera's Donald Pippin and noted

harpsichordist Albert Fuller, will complete the panel.

Fuller, of the Juilliard faculty and founder of the Aston Magna (early music) Foundation, will open the seminar with an address, "Venice, the Moon, and Us," at 8 p.m. tomorrow at University Christian Church, 2401 LeConte Avenue.

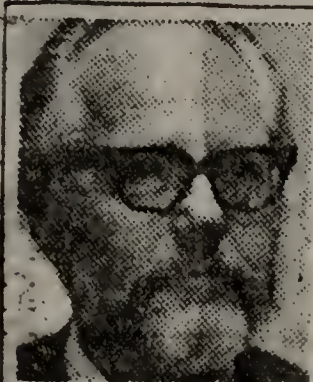
Then from 9 to 5 Saturday, also at the church, will be lectures on Venetian society, journalism and art, followed at 8 p.m. by a chamber concert of the music performed in the period's style and on its authentic instruments.

Tickets will be sold at the door for this single concert of Saturday evening. A full registration fee covers the entire seminar, with partial registrations available for tomorrow night's lecture or the Saturday-Sunday lectures and panels. Information is available at 232-8650.

Even in decline, Venice was brilliant and drew Europe's royal and wealthy tourists. On its Piazza San Marco, it produced an unending circus of the sensational and exotic. The opera houses were unrivaled for their spectacles, with ingenious machinery for the fabulous sets — one of them constructed entirely of hand-blown glass — with live animals and even real fountains operating on stage.

Alongside the wealthy patrons, were the new bourgeoisie, and the entire society became avid consumers of the great art, the music, the plays by Goldoni and others. Lecturing Saturday on "The Social World of 18th-Century Venice" will be historian Elisabeth Gleason, followed by Gustavo Costa of the UC-Berkeley faculty on Venetian journalism, and Linda Nasclmento on the art.

Venice's day was perhaps the most dazzling of any in the western world. Its wealth and power are long gone, but the splendor, through its unequalled artistic legacy and self-portrait, remains very much alive.



Innocent bystander

Bob
Lyhne

Other times and places via long song and dance

I REPORTED IN THIS space Tuesday on a 2½-day celebration of the grandeur of 18th century Venice as that once-imperial city at the head of the Adriatic slipped into glorious decline.

Like the tail of a comet, someone said.

The seminar, consisting of musical performances as well as lectures on music, stage, the social world, history and art, was the first event scheduled by Humanities West, a newly formed Bay Area organization that should attract increasing attention. It is worth knowing about.

The founders were Elaine Thornburgh, now president and artistic director, and Theresa Nelson, executive director. Both live in the East Bay. Both had had experience with interdisciplinary programs (Nelson remembers painting while lying on her back, to learn how it felt for Michelangelo). This doubtless gave them a sense of possibilities.

"I WAS DOING marketing work for the San Francisco Early Music Society," Nelson recalled. Thornburgh, a concert harpsichordist, then vice president, is now president of the society. "We met on the telephone, and talked for two hours," Nelson said. Thus the idea was hatched for an interdisciplinary program, or series of programs. They recruited Eleanor Selfridge-Field of Sunnyvale, music historian and expert on Venetian music of the 17th and 18th centuries. She coordinated the program, focusing on the interplay of the arts and a complex society.

Humanities West became a corporation as recently as December. "Putting together the non-profit organization was my master of business administration project at Golden Gate University," Nelson said.

The plan is to present two all-weekend programs each year, each highlighting the music, art and social context of a particular place and time — even to include the food served at lunch time, so far as possible.

The next event is going to be "Rembrandt's Amsterdam: Science, Politics and the Arts," Oct. 12 to 14, presented in cooperation with the consul general of the Netherlands.

REMBRANDT'S AMSTERDAM reflects Dutch capitalism and the immense wealth of the middle class.

Johan Snapper, Queen Beatrix professor of Dutch Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, is acting as coordinator, and the lecturers already are being confirmed.

"We're hoping the mayor of Amsterdam will come," Nelson said.

For spring of 1985, they have scheduled "Los Angeles in the '40s," which seems bland, unpromising and unnecessarily close to home until you start to think about the movie colony and the World War II refugee artists who settled there.

This program will be presented in cooperation with the Smithsonian Institution, and Paul Carlstrom will act as coordinator. He is director of the American Archives of the Arts, a branch of the Smithsonian. Under consideration is the possibility of presenting the Los Angeles program twice, in Los Angeles as well as the Bay Area.

"WE HAVE WANTED to do fifth century Greece, but three major speakers have been on sabbatical and unavailable," Nelson said. "We'll get to it."

So far, Humanities West has been something of a levitation act. There have been gifts from individuals and corporations. Volunteers have signed up to help where needed. So far they have not sought foundation grants, but soon will, given the experience of Venice.

"Foundations are leery of new organizations," Nelson said. "They want to be sure that you can do it. Now we have a track record."

As for the balance sheet, "it's close. People don't make fortunes in the arts."

No one is on salary. They have other interests. Thornburgh plays harpsichord concerts. Nelson continues as a business consultant in the arts, and sings concerts as well.

WHAT MAKES HUMANITIES West particularly noteworthy is that it is believed to be unique in the United States in its particular interdisciplinary approach to presentations. University of California Extension has similar lecture series, but without visual, musical or other performing elements. "We don't ask people just to sit and listen," Nelson said. "We want to make things come alive."

Anyone who wants to follow the progress of Humanities West can be added to the mailing list on request: Box 10052, Berkeley 94709.

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REPORTS

THE AMERICAN RECORDER

AUGUST 1984

Early Music in Puerto Rico

On a mid-February weekend when many ARS members were wearing fur-lined gloves and hoping their cars would start, the Puerto Rican Chapter and its guests put on suntan oil and played early music on the waterfront of Old San Juan.

The workshop began with a Friday afternoon reception followed by dinner in an open courtyard, orientation, and a Renaissance band session. Instruments on hand included the standard recorders and several viols as well as crumhorns, racket, rebec, kortholt, cornamuse, and an instrument that appeared to have been made by adding some spare washing machine parts to an old oboe. Participants spent an exhausting and exhilarating three and a half days playing and studying in the restored Arsenal building, a cloister-like enclave of arched rooms and patios looking out over the docks. The weekend ended with a public student-faculty recital followed by a farewell reception.

Incorporated only six months previously as the Early Music Society of Puerto Rico, the chapter had set a goal of enrolling five stateside residents and eighteen to twenty-four islanders. Chapter members sent mailings and made numerous phone calls to the frozen North. To drum up interest on the island, they presented two concerts of Purcell's *Come Ye Sons of Art*, appearing twice on

Puerto Rican morning television to plug concerts and workshop and to discuss early instruments and early music in general. As a result of these efforts, we had the pleasure of hosting seven stateside residents from Louisiana, New York, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania and a total of twenty-four islanders. These numbers gave us the desired teacher-student ratio, and the group was small enough for us all to get to know each other yet large enough for a diversity of instruments and levels.

Our stateside visitors roomed at Tres Palmas, an oceanside guest house that provided a complimentary piña colada and an air-conditioned room, laundry service, and breakfast for only twenty-five dollars a day. Two chapter members drove our guests to the Arsenal and back each day. Two-hour breaks for lunch and dinner gave us all a chance to explore Old San Juan on foot, and free time from 6:00 p.m. Saturday until 1:30 p.m. Sunday allowed everyone to enjoy the tropical nightlife.

The faculty was excellent. Valerie Horst quickly convinced every self-styled "advanced" player that he or she might just learn a thing or two during the weekend. Her gentle professionalism made us renew our commitment to serious, disciplined practice. Ruth Cunningham worked patiently with the intermediate-level mixed ensemble. Her empha-

sis on breathing, tonguing, and phrasing helped us take the big step from playing the notes in time to playing music. Ruth's classes generally reflected her soft-spoken and reserved personality. After one particularly successful reading of a melancholic love song, however, the tenor section set down their instruments and burst into wild, congratulatory hand slaps and bilingual praises for the whole class. Finally, Martha Bishop, the Atlanta fireball, was everywhere, bolstering the group with her unending energy and zest for early music. To Valerie, Ruth, and Martha, a very well-deserved "sobresaliente" for an excellent workshop.

At the farewell reception, most of our stateside guests promised to return next year and bring their friends. Why not begin thinking now about a 1985 mid-February weekend of early music in the tropical sun of Puerto Rico?

George B. Parks, Jr.

Humanities West

"Venice in Glorious Decline" was the subject of a weekend seminar presented by Humanities West in Berkeley, Calif., April 6-8. This recently formed non-profit organization was inspired by the Aston Magna Foundation, whose summer sessions were devoted to the arts and humanities of the seventeenth



Puerto Rican workshop participants on the balcony of La Casa del Capitán, overlooking Old San Juan harbor.



Martha Bishop's mixed ensemble performing at the student-faculty recital.

and eighteenth centuries. Like Aston Magna, Humanities West brought in renowned performers and scholars, notably Jaap Schröder, Baroque violin, of Yale University and the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis; Nicholas McGegan, Baroque opera specialist and artist-in-residence at Washington University; and Judith Nelson, soprano, noted for her performances in Baroque works.

Albert Fuller, professor of music at Juilliard and the founder of Aston Magna, gave the opening address on "La Serenissima," the

Venice whose eleven-hundred-year history as a refuge from barbarism provided the setting where the quest for knowledge, individuality, and art could take place. Patronage of the arts was immense: the citizens of no other European center spent as much money on (or talked as much about) paintings, household goods, sculpture, and theatrical and musical events of all kinds. Greek and Roman mythical and pastoral themes provided topics of conversation for the intelligentsia and subjects for poets and musicians both amateur

and professional. Alessandro Marcello, for example, who wrote the earliest sonatas for the recorder, used the instrument specifically to evoke the Arcadian spirit.

In "Musical Life in Vivaldi's Venice," Eleanor Selfridge-Field, music historian and program coordinator for the weekend, spoke about the great diversity of performances to be heard at the opera as well as in theaters, salons, churches, and at the annual carnival—and of course on the canals, where Venice's unique contribution, the singing gondoliers, held forth. Elizabeth Gleason looked at other aspects of Venetian culture in a very interesting lecture on the "Social World of Eighteenth-Century Venice." In "Artworks as Souvenirs: Venetian Scene Paintings," Linda Ridings Nascimento told how tourists from throughout Europe created a new type of patronage by their demand for scenes of the city—rather expensive postcards, but a source of great profit for the artists. Gustavo Costa discussed journalism and comparative literature of the time, and William Holmes gave an illustrated lecture on how Venetian operas were staged in the eighteenth century.

Music was the art that best showcased the "Pearl of the Adriatic" for those attending the seminar. Jaap Schröder gave a demonstration in which he pointed out that the bow hand controls the expression, the rhetoric of the composer. In an evening program he performed sonatas by Vivaldi and Marcello and a remarkable invention by Bonporti, all with admirable clarity and precision. Judith Nelson and Susan Rode Morris captivated their audience with a spectacular display of vocalism in duo and solo works of Marcello and Vivaldi, a rarely heard group of gondola songs, and Barbara Strozzi's *I Baci*. They were well supported by Elisabeth LeGuin, cello, Sarah Mullen, violin, and Elaine Thornburgh, harpsichordist, the founder and president of Humanities West.

Nicholas McGegan skillfully conducted (from the harpsichord) Albinoni's intermezzo *Vespetta e Pimpinone*, first performed in 1708. Paul Tavernier proved to be a full-throated bass with the requisite comic sense, and Dorothy Barnhouse's characterization was excellent.

We can look forward to a similar session on "Rembrandt's Amsterdam" on October 12-14; "Los Angeles in the 1940s" is scheduled for the spring of 1985.

Lee McRae

New Katz Fund Trustees

Four new trustees were appointed in December of 1983 to five-year terms on the board of the Dr. Erich Katz Memorial Fund by ARS president Shelley Gruskin. They are Richard Conn of Denver; Suzanne Ferguson of Grosse Pointe, Mich.; Michael Foote of Minneapolis; and Ilse Schaler of Bristol, R.I. The new board will be responsible for the activities of the Fund, which was set up in 1973 to honor the longtime ARS leader who died in that year.

Mr. Conn, who was elected chair of the



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